

GIMME

Keep an eye on the house

There used to be a time when installing home security cameras involved rolling out expensive coaxial cable. But the longer the cable, the poorer the signal quality. Enter network cameras, which use a bog-standard Ethernet port or, even better, wireless connectivity to connect to a computer screen. They use IP, the communications protocol of the Internet, so their images can be viewed from anywhere and the cameras themselves can be controlled from any device with an Internet connection, ensuring good picture quality.

Axis Communications, a Swedish company, is the market leader in network cameras. The *FM* had a look at the company's 207W camera, which features both Ethernet (network cable; transfer speed: 100 Mbit/s) and Wi-Fi (wireless local-area network; 54 Mbit/s).

The 190 g 207W has a 1,3-megapixel lens and uses Mpeg-4 and Motion Jpeg compression to reduce bandwidth consumption. Video can be broadcast in seven resolutions so those with constrained bandwidth (and that's most South Africans) can use less bandwidth-hungry settings. Pictures are broadcast at up to 30 frames per second using progressive scan. There's also a built-in mic for one-way audio communication.

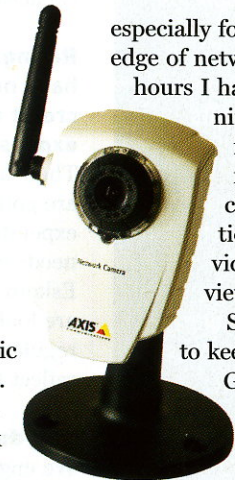
Undoubtedly the coolest feature of the 207W — and other network cameras — is the ability to access them via the Web. Want to check that everything's okay at home? Simply fire up an Internet connection and request pictures (still or video) from the device. Of course, for video you'll need a broadband connection at home with a fast uplink.

Other cool features of the camera include a built-in motion sensor that can be programmed to alert you automatically when it detects movement.

Setting up the 207W is a little tricky,

especially for people with limited knowledge of networking, but in a couple of hours I had the system up and running. Video quality was good in-home over my wireless network but my asynchronous broadband connection meant full-resolution video was jerky when I tried to view it over the Web.

Still, the device is a nifty way to keep an eye on events at home. Given SA's high crime rate, network cameras such as this one are going to sell like hot cakes. **Duncan McLeod**



Product: Axis 207W Network Camera

Pros: Keep an eye on things from anywhere; adjustable resolutions; tiny and lightweight; good image quality

Cons: Tricky to set up

Price: R2 800

For more: www.axis.com

Cool factor /5: 😊😊😊😊

Usability /5: 😊😊😊

Value for money /5: 😊😊😊😊